

RECORD OF A MEETING AT RAMBOUILLET
at 10.15 a.m. on Sunday, December 20, 1959

Present:

President de Gaulle

President Eisenhower

The Prime Minister

Monsieur Debre

and Interpreters.

President de Gaulle said that he was glad that at last the representatives of the three Western Summit Powers were met together. He wished to discuss the best method of cooperation between the Three Powers, the United States, the United Kingdom and France. There were a large number of subjects in which they were interested upon a world-wide basis, beyond the present limitations of NATO. One of the most important of these was Africa; then there was the question of Germany and its future; there was the question of military cooperation throughout the world. These Three Powers had world-wide responsibilities which was not true of the other Powers in NATO, such as Germany, which had now no colonies, or Italy. We Three had to consider the Far East, the Middle East and Europe as a whole.

President Eisenhower said that he would like to suggest the establishment of a tripartite machinery to operate on a clandestine basis with the object of discussing questions of common interest to the three Governments. The group which he had in mind might meet in one of the three capitals, personally the President preferred London, but which capital was immaterial provided that there was no question of any contact

with NATO. Such an organisation would have many advantages; in particular it would ensure that at least there was some agreement between the three Governments on the facts of any given situation. The Prime Minister said that he quite agreed with this suggestion. President Eisenhower continued that his idea was that each country should supply one or two men who should not only be competent but also of specially good judgment and of reasonably high rank. There might perhaps
be someone on

the political side, a military figure and an economist. President de Gaulle expressed himself very satisfied with this idea.

Turning to Germany, President de Gaulle enquired what the West would really accept. President Eisenhower said that he felt that for the next few years at least there could be no question of any move which might be interpreted as a Western retreat. This was not a situation such as the West faced in the field of the nuclear tests negotiation, in which there was room for manoeuvre in the details of the technical and scientific situation. As regards East/West relations generally, the President felt that there might be a beginning of co-operation between the two sides; the important thing was to have a situation in which bargains were honourably observed. The whole process would have to continue step by step.

President de Gaulle said that he felt that the manner in which one approached Mr. Khrushchev was of great importance. One should not allow Mr. Khrushchev to adopt an attitude of superiority to the West over Berlin. It would be wrong to admit that the Berlin situation was abnormal; the true position was that the D.D.R. was the cause of the Berlin situation. It would be most important not to allow Mr. Khrushchev to say that the Berlin situation needed changing. This was a tactic which he was most successfully employing. The East German regime was quite artificial. The Prime Minister said that in a sense all Communist Governments were artificial, and President de Gaulle agreed. President Eisenhower said that he accepted this, but the argument which Mr. Khrushchev would

use was that West Germany was equally an abnormality created by the West. President de Gaulle pointed out that West Germany was the result of the application of the principle of self-determination. President Eisenhower said that this was true, but brought the argument back to a basic difference with the Russians. This was that they had no respect for the principle of self-determination, and indeed laughed at it. They said that the people in the Soviet Union were happy and contented and going ahead; they had no intention of changing their Government. The Prime Minister said that of course the West should not accept Mr. Khrushchev's moral position but should reject it. This however did not help with the facts of the Berlin situation, which was a difficult one. President de Gaulle enquired how the West could strengthen it. The Prime Minister said that he thought the West had done well at the Geneva meeting of Foreign Ministers, and should stand on the position adopted on that occasion. The conference of Foreign Ministers had broken down on what was in a sense a metaphysical argument. The Western Powers had said that at the end of an interim period the situation would revert to what it was at the moment; the Russians on the other hand said that the position would not be quite the same. At one time the Prime Minister had thought that the Russians would come to accept the Western position, and when they did not he formed the view that possibly the reason was that Mr. Khrushchev wished to reserve this concession and to make it himself if he got the Summit Meeting which he

desired. It was possible therefore that at a Summit meeting Mr. Khrushchev might accept the Western thesis. What was important was that the West should not move back from the Geneva position, as Dr. Adenauer had seemed to suggest on December 19 when he had talked about the proposals of July 28. President de Gaulle said that perhaps the position of July 28 should be the final Western position and not the initial one. President Eisenhower said that we could indicate to the Russians that we could make no concessions beyond this position. President de Gaulle suggested that the West should also add that they would regard the Soviet attitude on Berlin as the test of their general intentions. President Eisenhower said that he agreed generally with this view but that it was very important not to introduce any suggestion of a Western ultimatum. After all, the recent trouble about Berlin had begun with what the West had thought to be an ultimatum from Mr. Khrushchev, although he denied this. President de Gaulle agreed but suggested that the West could point out to Mr. Khrushchev that he had asked for a Summit meeting and could therefore reasonably be required to give an indication of his good intentions at it.

President de Gaulle enquired what was the attitude of the West to be about the frontiers of Germany. The Prime Minister enquired if President de Gaulle meant the eastern frontiers, i.e. the Oder/Neisser line, or whether he included the frontiers with Czechoslovakia, which some Germans sometimes mentioned. President de Gaulle

said that the main question was the so-called Oder/Neisser line. He had referred to the frontiers of Germany in general because there were other questions. President Eisenhower said that he had not talked about this with Mr. Khrushchev. Chancellor Adenauer however had recently indicated to him that he accepted the present frontiers of Germany as a fait accompli. They regarded this acceptance as a useful bargaining or debating point. Bonn had been full of placards about frontiers when he visited it in the autumn but Dr. Adenauer had not seemed to take this seriously. President de Gaulle enquired if the West wanted Germany to have the present frontiers and what they thought could be said to the Russians, if they raised the question at a Summit meeting. The Prime Minister suggested that the West should reply that this was a matter to be settled after unification. M. Debre suggested that it might be dangerous to take this view, since it would leave a major question unsettled after the unification of Germany. The Prime Minister enquired if France wanted Germany to be reunified. M. Debre indicated dissent. President Eisenhower said that the trouble was that if Germany remained divided for a long time this would mean the continuance of an abnormal situation in Europe, which could cause trouble. M. Debre said that the problem of reunification was a theoretical one. The practical question was what attitude the three Powers adopted towards the Russians over Germany. If they showed weakness over the status of Berlin or Germany in general there would be dangers. In spite of Chancellor

Adenauer Germany was still very fragile politically. If West Berlin seemed to be abandoned, and if an agreement with the Russians appeared to be reached at the expense of Germany, then West Germany opinion would deteriorate very fast. That was the reason for remaining firm on the future of Berlin. The Prime Minister said that this was a reason for not raising the frontier question. The best course was to stand on the Geneva position. President de Gaulle said that he agreed and that the status quo was really what should be preserved. President Eisenhower enquired if the price of this might be a guarantee of the present borders. This had not yet been raised.

President de Gaulle enquired what the Western attitude should be about the Soviet offer on West Berlin. President Eisenhower said that it was of course impossible to stop Mr. Khrushchev signing his treaty with Eastern Germany but he could not be allowed unilaterally to cut down the rights. He had said this very firmly to Mr. Khrushchev at Camp David and had warned him that if he attempted unilateral action of this sort the result would be a war. President de Gaulle said that it seemed clear therefore that the West should try to keep the status quo and tell Mr. Khrushchev that his attitude on Germany would be regarded as the crucial test of his intentions. The Prime Minister asked what should be the position about reunification of Germany. President de Gaulle said that he would not say that there was to be no reunification, nor should the West specifically refuse special arrangements for Berlin. The argument with Mr. Khrushchev might be that as he wanted a detente, and so did the West, it would be better tacitly

to preserve the status quo in Germany. Of course later on, after the detente had been achieved, it would be possible to examine the position. President Eisenhower said that in that case it might be as well not to mention Germany and Berlin at the Summit but to talk instead on disarmament. The Prime Minister said that Berlin and Germany were bound to be discussed. It all depended on one's estimate of what would happen. President de Gaulle said that if Mr. Khrushchev wanted to make trouble then he would no doubt do so; then there would not be a detente. The Prime Minister agreed and said that this was a situation which the West must face as a possibility. President de Gaulle said that the West should perhaps enquire Mr. Khrushchev's intentions, and, if he expressed a wish for a detente, suggest more contacts, cultural exchanges and so on, adding perhaps the suggestion of Summit meetings every year, and then see what Mr. Khrushchev replied. The Prime Minister said that he feared that this was not a realistic approach to the facts of the situation, but only time would show what ought to be done.

President Eisenhower said that Mr. Khrushchev had created the problem of Berlin by his speech of 1958. If it was possible to go back to the position of July 28 we could perhaps say that we could stand no further concessions. At Camp David he had spoken to Mr. Khrushchev about Red China and they had been frank in their views about the two Chinese regimes. However, he had pointed out to Mr. Khrushchev that there would be war in the Pacific if an attack was made on General Chiang Kai Shek. Mr. Khrushchev had then dropped the subject. The same ^{lines} ~~facts~~ might be ^{adopted} ~~implied~~ about Berlin. He agreed that there should be no move away from the position adopted at Geneva but at the same time the position taken by the West there should be regarded as representing the limit of concession.

The Prime Minister said that the true position would only become clear at the Summit Meeting. There must be further discussion about the position beforehand. Of course, it would be best if the Russians would accept the Western position, if necessary with some tiny adjustment.

President Eisenhower said that of course the Summit Meeting would begin with each side taking their prepared positions. The Prime Minister agreed but added that it would be impossible to refuse to discuss Berlin. President Eisenhower said that Mr. Khrushchev had told him quite frankly that it would take ten years of education before he would allow free elections in the Satellites. He also said that Chancellor Adenauer did not want reunification, except for fear of a Socialist majority in a reunified Germany.

President de Gaulle said that
Germany was always unfathomable. France was not in a hurry for the reunification of Germany. He did not say that someday there would not be reunification, but there was no reason to press the matter to any immediate issue.

President Eisenhower said that the West should therefore wait to see what a Summit produced. They should try to take the line that it would be better to avoid, or at least not to pursue, controversial questions which were likely to worsen relations because of rigid positions. The Prime Minister said that he would like to make one observation. The present situation was not a detente; it was simply the removal of the ultimatum which Mr. Khrushchev had presented in November 1958, and which he had then postponed and finally given up after his talks at Camp David. In other words, after November 1958 there had not been a detente

but a worsening in relations and the present relaxation was only relative. President de Gaulle suggested that this was only part of Mr. Khrushchev's tactics. He first created an artificial crisis and then claimed that the calming of it was a detente. If the present situation was settled Mr. Khrushchev would no doubt create another crisis later on.

President de Gaulle said that he would now like to say a little about Africa. France realised that there was going to be an evolution in Africa; they accepted this and hoped to guide the emerging people on the ^{road} ~~right~~ to self-determination. They felt that it was very important that the evolution should take place in alliance with the West and not against it. Some African nationalists, like M. Sekou Toure, were hostile to the West. M. Debre said that there was a Communist plan for subversion in Africa. There were many indications of this, especially the numbers of young students in Moscow and Peking. He had spoken twice to the Prime Minister about the necessity for Anglo-French co-operation in Africa and this was something which affected all the West. President de Gaulle said that France agreed that the African peoples must take their destiny in their own hands and France was not Colonialist. It was however most important to ensure that the development of these countries was in association with the West. Some Americans thought that the United States might be able to replace France in Africa, but they were wrong. If "the old Colonial Powers" were excluded, the new countries would fall to Communism. President Eisenhower said that he did not understand President de Gaulle's suggestion.

Turkey, Greece, Pakistan, Iran and even Italy. This was a terrible burden and therefore the United States were very glad to share it with other countries. Germany for example ought to be brought to give more. The Prime Minister said that Germany had a lot of money and could certainly help. President de Gaulle said that the proposed Western Committee on under-developed countries might be very useful. President Eisenhower agreed but said that this Committee, perhaps under O.E.E.C., would have to be quite separate from the tripartite committee which he had proposed. This tripartite group should, he thought, meet in London and the members of each country should be attached to their Embassies. Secrecy was all-important. The Standing Group in Washington should be preserved, however, if only as a "front". In any case, this would not matter since the instructions to the National representatives were sent by their Governments. President de Gaulle said that there should also be a tripartite group to discuss NATO problems. The Prime Minister said that although the tripartite group might discuss these problems it would be unwise to say this, even privately, and it would be better to take the line that the tripartite group would ~~xxxx~~ discuss problems of common interest to the United States, France and the United Kingdom.

President de Gaulle said that France was not happy with the present organisation of NATO, with its Committees and interminable discussions, and with the numerous small member States which made things awkward. France hoped in the next year to bring back a substantial number of troops and aircraft from Algeria. When this had happened it might be desirable to change the present NATO arrangements.

The French representative on any tripartite group would produce detailed proposals. The United States, the United Kingdom and France really bore the burden of the Alliance, admittedly in different proportions, and they should discuss these problems together. President Eisenhower said that this might be true but that other countries were very sensitive about the position. It would be a great mistake ever to allow these countries to think that a Western triumvirate had been established. For this reason the proposed committee should be formed only to discuss problems in which the three countries had a common interest. President de Gaulle said that he agreed.

President Eisenhower said that he wished to raise a matter which was causing very serious concern to the military in NATO. He wished to reassure them about the question of unifying the air defence of NATO. He quite agreed that it might be desirable to have a review of NATO's organisation, but until this was possible the Western countries would only be hurting themselves and NATO unless they were able to settle the problem of integrated air defence. Western Europe was too small to have separate arrangements. He did not suggest that all aircraft should be assigned to NATO, but he did not think that there was any way of defending Europe without a unified Command. President de Gaulle said that he agreed that this was an important question and France was prepared to agree to co-ordinated radar and to central information. France was also quite happy that her tactical air force in Germany should be in NATO. France must however reserve to herself the right to decide the employment of the rest of

her airforce. The Prime Minister said that there were two sorts of aircraft; those assigned to NATO and those outside the NATO Organisation. The United Kingdom had very few of the latter left; in fact no more than enough to defend the deterrent. M. Debre said that France had strategic responsibilities which went beyond the NATO area; other Powers had not this commitment. The Prime Minister said that the British forces assigned to NATO had of course to be placed under NATO Generals. President Eisenhower said that he agreed that a scheme of reorganisation for NATO might be prepared but the difficulty was that as he understood it France was holding back from the NATO Command structure some aircraft which had been allocated to NATO. President de Gaulle said that he did not think that this was quite accurate. In any case, the position of France would be quite different, for France had no nuclear weapons. But as the United States and the United Kingdom kept nuclear weapons for themselves, France was put in a position which was untenable in the long term.

President Eisenhower said that he could not speak for the long term; things had a way of changing. But the United States could not move faster than Congress would allow. As regards nuclear missiles, France could at any time have the same arrangement as the United Kingdom under which missiles were given subject only to the "key of the cupboard" arrangement. In fact it would not be too difficult to obtain a key in a real emergency. As regards nuclear information, the United States could only give this to a country which had demonstrated a nuclear capacity. This was a somewhat absurd position since it meant only giving help to those who did not want it. At the same time, President de Gaulle must realise that there was as much nationalism in the United States

as elsewhere. His own view had always been that Allies should be helped if they were to remain allies, and he had tried to combat the various arguments used against giving information to France. Some people said that things leaked in Paris, but he did not believe this to be true, but he was bound ~~xx~~ by the legal position. He himself would like to see NATO armed with the best weapons as a deterrent, and an atomic stockpile under NATO. President de Gaulle said that he hoped that cooperation on nuclear matters with the United States would improve. France would explode her first atom bomb in March; he was told that this would be 40 times more than the bomb exploded at Hiroshima. President Eisenhower said that from memory this would be a megaton bomb. President de Gaulle said that the explosion would be a ~~megaton~~ ^{atomic} one. President Eisenhower said that this was a large atomic bomb, since the biggest American one was 600,000 tons. But when one got to these figures, differences meant little. He had fought a battle for liberalisation in the United States since 1946, and was gaining ground. Meanwhile, it was important to have the best coordination of the troops of all the NATO countries. President de Gaulle said that he understood the position of Congress as regards the general run of countries, but France was different.

The Prime Minister said that he would like to ask ^{further} President de Gaulle/about the NATO Command structure. There would soon be 12 or more German Divisions. Was it not advisable that these should be placed under some general system of international command in different groups? He was thinking of the years ahead. It was tiresome for national forces to be mixed up with others but it had certain advantages nevertheless. President Eisenhower said that as

long as there was no integration below divisional level, no problem arose. President de Gaulle thought that when Herr Strauss had his own Divisions he would want his own command area. The Prime Minister enquired if President de Gaulle wanted ~~this~~ this to happen. President de Gaulle enquired how one could prevent it. President Eisenhower said that it would seem to him wrong to have all the German forces in one area; they should be strung out along the front. Four strong corps was what was necessary, not an army. The Prime Minister said that he agreed and that was why he felt that it was important to keep the spirit of international command going. President de Gaulle said that these questions could perhaps be worked out in the secret Tripartite Group. President Eisenhower said that the Tripartite Group should have a military representative; he specifically did not wish to suggest that there should be three representatives, one for each Service, but thought that one representative would be enough. The Group must not be too big. The Prime Minister said that no doubt the suggestion of a Tripartite Group would need to be worked out in detail and thought about. The President said that in the United States Administration no one would know of this arrangement except Mr. Gates and Mr. Herter. The Prime Minister repeated that this was a serious matter which should be studied further.

President de Gaulle enquired what the position in India was and President Eisenhower gave an account of his talks with Mr. Nehru. He said that his attitude to the Chinese had altered although he did not accept that their aggressiveness was due to their communism. One advantage of the present situation was that India and Pakistan might agree to more co-operation and might station their troops on their northern frontiers instead of along their common boundaries. Mr. Nehru had said that all problems between India and Pakistan should be solved by negotiation and this suited the Indians better than the Pakistanis. The head waters of the three main rivers were held by India and all hopes of co-operation were based upon some arrangement about these. The President had himself sent messages to General Ayub and to Mr. Nehru urging them to make progress in co-operation. Mr. Nehru had not asked for military guarantees since he was unwilling to abandon his attitude of neutrality.

President de Gaulle said that as regards Laos he felt that it was important to damp things down and not to exacerbate them. President Eisenhower said that in his view the Laotian situation was better and he agreed that it should be calmed down as much as possible. The problem of little land-locked countries was very difficult as the United States had found in the case of Jordan.

The Prime Minister said that he wished to say a word about economic matters. Just as President de Gaulle was anxious about nuclear weapons, so the United Kingdom were worried about economic matters in Europe and the division between the Six and the Seven. A solution to this must

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be found; perhaps a start could be made between the United Kingdom, France and the United States. President Eisenhower said that the United States was somewhat on the sidelines in this question. The Prime Minister said that he must really speak out about this. The situation was very serious and if allowed to develop might lead to the United Kingdom having to leave NATO. It was impossible to keep troops and aircraft in Germany at a cost of £60 million a year if France and Germany were waging an economic war against the United Kingdom. A solution to this problem must and would be found. M. Debre said that there was no discrimination yet between the Six and the Seven. President de Gaulle said that the Prime Minister had seemed always to think that the Six wished for an economic war on her but this was not true. The Prime Minister said that he knew this was not the intention of the Six, but it was what would happen. President de Gaulle said that since he had assumed power France had been able to liberalise her trading policy. The Prime Minister said that the Six and the Seven must work together and not separately. President Eisenhower said that he had always felt that the strength of Western Europe should be united and not divided in the economic field. He had always ^{regretted} ~~regretted~~ that an all-European organisation had not proved possible. It should not be impossible to succeed. The Prime Minister said it was not impossible but it was certainly essential. M. Debre said that there had been no discrimination up to now.

President Eisenhower.

President Eisenhower said that he was still worried about the question of NATO air defence. Would President de Gaulle agree that General Norstad should be asked to call on some competent French personality who could put his doubts at rest and clarify the position? President de Gaulle said that as regards the French tactical air force the French government were quite content with the present command arrangements. They did not however wish to change the arrangements for the rest of their air forces. When the forces came back from Algeria there could be a re-examination of NATO. France wanted to keep her air defence under her own control but was prepared to make an agreement on co-operation with NATO for the use of these forces. In the same way when the French fleet had been withdrawn they had been and were ready to make an agreement about its co-operation with NATO. France was also prepared to accept unified radar and communications. President Eisenhower said that as he understood modern war everything would happen in an hour or so. If France came in she would of course have the right to withdraw her air force if necessary but if there were different commands the dangers to Europe were much increased. The position would be quite impossible if all the NATO countries kept a large proportion of their own air forces separate; under such circumstances NATO would break up. The United Kingdom had accepted the proposed arrangement. The Prime Minister said that this was the case although the United Kingdom had memories of 1940. President de Gaulle suggested that the United Kingdom had no

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integrated forces. The Prime Minister said that this was not correct. The bulk of the United Kingdom Air Force was under NATO command, to say nothing of the Army in Germany. General de Gaulle said that he did not challenge the idea of a Supreme Command in war, nor would he object to this being an American. He had also to consider however the French national point of view. This was very important. In the secret Tripartite Group the French representatives would present some specific proposals for the military reorganisation of the Alliance if this was desired.

President Eisenhower said that these questions could be studied but study would take at least six months. What was important was to remove now the doubts and worries of the NATO Military Commanders ^{who carried out} ~~to carry out~~ great responsibilities. Otherwise there were more difficulties. For example the Germans were saying that they did not know to whom they should give their growing air force.

President de Gaulle enquired why the question of air defence had suddenly become so important. President Eisenhower said that he had no desire for a United States command and indeed would welcome a Commander of some other nationality since when there was an American commander other countries looked too much to the United States to help them and did not accept their own responsibilities. President de Gaulle said that General Norstad could certainly come and explain his proposals. President Eisenhower said that, going back to 1949, he had then found that the various NATO countries were too weak on their own and NATO had grown up in an attempt to create a more effective defence for the whole than could be

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provided by individual powers. All countries had nationalist feelings and for that reason the NATO Command structure was perhaps more complicated than was strictly desirable on military grounds. In an alliance of 15 nations however some compromise was essential.

Mr. Debre said that France was in a special position because of her responsibilities abroad and because of the fact that her objectives in certain places had not always been agreed by the other NATO countries. The Prime Minister enquired if France was in a different position from the United Kingdom in this regard. The United Kingdom had committed large forces to NATO but he was quite prepared to withdraw these since it would save considerable sums of money. President Eisenhower said that he did not like to think in terms of breaking up NATO. If any country was able to stand on its own for a time it was the United States. But he believed in a co-operative effort. Of course he agreed that France was not in the same position as Holland, Italy or Germany but national feelings must be subordinated to the interests of the alliance

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The meeting ended/about/12.30 p.m.